

The Fair Elena



J. E. Gilman



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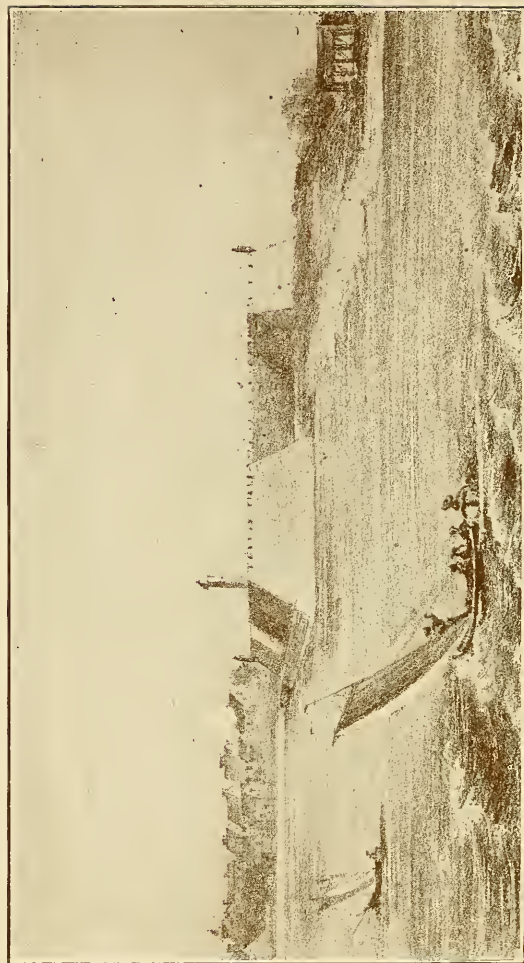
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THE FAIR ELENA

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FORT MARION, ST. AUGUSTINE, FLA.

THE FAIR ELENA

A Legend of the Old Fort
at St. Augustine

BY

J. E. GILMAN

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No. 1.

THE FAIR ELENA

THE FAIR ELENA

OH! summer land, upon thy shores,
the sea
Unstinted casts its treasures, bound-
less, free,
And gently woos with many a soft
caress,
In blandishment of murmured gentle-
ness,
Then rageful, foaming, towers with
savage roar
In angry passion, beating at thy door,
Only to sink again, appeased with
smiles—
From thy fair land, and verdure-
crowned isles,
Now suppliant rests caressing at thy
feet,

THE FAIR ELENA

With rippling waves, in cooing kisses
 sweet,
And decked with glowing tints and
 colors warm,
In close embrace receives thy radiant
 form.
Fair flower land! the realm of lotus
 dreams,
Romance in all thy varied history
 gleams—
And gilds each page with ventures
 strange and bold
Of knightly search for conquest, and
 for gold,
A gorgeous pageantry of burnished
 arms,
Of sieges, sorties, ruthless war's
 alarms,
Of pirates' raid, and bandit bucca-
 neer,
And valorous deeds of mailed cav-
 alier

THE FAIR ELENA

Through trembling swamp or lethal
 everglade,
By labyrinthine paths no hand has
 made,
The stealthy Indian glides with noise-
 less tread,
And shadows cross the page, in flam-
 ing red.
Yet o'er the ruined cot and broken
 form
The creeping vine has laid its mantle
 warm.
To legendary tales the deed consigns,
And time's effacing hand has dimmed
 the lines.

Oh, queenly land! Enthroned on sum-
 mer seas,
How many nations, suitors at thy
 knees,
Have woven fair the richly bannered
 page

THE FAIR ELENA

And claimed thy realm as richest
heritage?
De Soto's hosts entwine with lillied
France,
With these combine De Leon's sad
romance,
And England's lion banners wave
amain,
With close companioned lion flag of
Spain,
Till Freedom's starry ensign rules se-
rene,
The standard of thy throne, thou
mighty Queen.
And merged in sisterhood among the
States,
Art guardian charged to keep these
southern gates.
Oh! Land mid summer seas, in em-
eralds drest,
To dwell within thy realm is blissful
rest.

THE FAIR ELENA

There closely twined in warmth of
Nature's heart,
And flower crowned, with all her
choicest art,
Are fragrant groves, with white and
gold o'erlaid,
That laughing, bear the fruit the sun
has made
In likeness of himself. The golden
globes,
The jewelled ornaments upon thy
robes,
Are regal gifts thy bounty sends to
all,
Like benedictions shed, where'er they
fall.
There mango groves with tangled
roots of trees,
Like serpents, fold on fold, some prey
to seize,
Yet sheltering refuge give their
domes within

THE FAIR ELENA

To myriad tribes of elves with glitter-
ing fin,
Or safe, when falls the night in dark-
ness deep,
Protects the homing birds in perfect
sleep.
While springing clear, from caverned
crystal deep,
In joyous bounty sparkling leap,
As Horeb's rock gushed forth at
God's command,
And generous, poured its blessing
o'er the land,
Thy bosomed springs pour forth, in
very truth,
In manifold—the living fount of
youth.
And over all thy tasseled, waving
palms
Majestic rear their heads through
storms and calms

THE FAIR ELENA

And bend in welcome to each wander-
ing guest
Of thy fair land—Florida—ever
blest.

When trod the venturous foot amid
the unknown lands,
Hispania's armies proudly ruled Flo-
ridian strands—
And reared a fortress strong, that
should their hold retain
Upon the realm they'd seized for
Philip—King of Spain.
Menendez then commander was, in
fief of Rome,
To free the land of heresy, and build
a home.
And by his king Adelantado made su-
preme
Of all the Spanish main, and far be-
yond. A dream

THE FAIR ELENA

Of glorious conquest — dazzling
wealth—perchance to find
That fount whose crystal wave in
emerald bank enshrined
Conferred immortal youth on him
who did but drink,
Unfailing source of life within its
fabled brink.
The standard of the cross he reared
with fury's flame,
And deeds of love like this he wrought
in Christus' name
With mailed arm, the grim old chief,
his sword upraised,
And slew some scores of heretics.
"God's name be praised."
The gentle Indian, tamed with toil-
some task and lash,
Oft seamed his heathen hide with
pike-inflicted gash,
And thus the law of love and peace
to him was shown,

THE FAIR ELENA

And heaven was gained with many a
tear and moan.

He scuttled ships and hanged the
crews, or prisoners sent,

In irons bound, to Spain, for darker
punishment

Of churchly trial, torture-cell, *auto*
da fé,

In loving kindness burnt to grace
some holy day.

Through life his footprints stained
the earth with blood;

The Church assoiled his soul from
crime's ensanguined flood

For each atrocious deed—thanksgiv-
ing mass, he said.

A saint he lived and, blessed, died at
last in bed—

Don Pedro, dying, left behind the
youthful town

San Augustine—a star amid the
jewelled crown

THE FAIR ELENA

Of Spanish colonies—yet e'er he
passed away
The French, revengeful, armed, had
made a swift foray,
And burned the town and fort—bap-
tized the land anew
With human sacrifice, much as the
heathen do.
For being Christians made it right to
slaughter all
Of different creed, and so they slew
both great and small.
'Tis true that many innocent with
them were slain,
But God would know His own—and
they were out of pain;
'Twas but the past's libation poured
from living bowls
To greet the future's long account of
murdered souls.
The soil, enriched with copious dews
of wine-red crime,

THE FAIR ELENA

No doubt would harvest vintage great
in coming time
Upon the site where France had
crushed Hispania's pride.
King Philip planned redoubts anew,
well fortified
With sturdy walls and ramparts, deep
embrasured front,
With cannon grim and open mouthed
to bear the brunt
Of direful siege or fierce attack of
warring foes;
Portcullised gates that friends admit,
all else oppose.
A deep encircling moat glacis, a demi-
lune,
To guard the port a bastioned curtain,
all rock hewn,
"Each line with highest art and skill,"
so read the plan,
As drawn by Spanish engineers, after
Vanban.

THE FAIR ELENA

And now a hundred years have passed
since first begun—
A hundred years of toil beneath the
burning sun,
Of sullen convict-knaves brought here
from other lands—
Unwilling Indian serfs, controlled by
iron hands,
And captured men-at-arms, in igno-
minious place,
As slaves, to build a fort for men of
alien race.
Successive throngs have come and
worn their lives away,
Each stone cement with blood, as rose
the fortress gray,
A Lazar house of woe, if all the tale
were told,
Of cruel deeds to man—these hun-
dred years of old.
Now squarely grim, from rampart's
foot to parapet,

THE FAIR ELENA

The frowning walls are reared in
place and firmly set,
And proudly floats the silken folds in
lordly laze
Of blazoned banner, on its staff, amid
the haze
Of smoking incense from the sacred
vessels flung,
While mass is clamorous, voiced with
cannon's brazen lung,
For murder, war and all such arts
must hallowed be
With holy service of the church. By
this set free,
The veriest scoundrel of them all was
justified
To cut a throat or sack a town—with
honest pride.
And now the years glide on, with
sometimes calls to arms
And sometimes peace. And safe,
when sounded war's alarm,

THE FAIR ELENA

Within the sheltering fort the people
of the town
Awaited happier days. When war
clouds ceased to frown
Then came they forth, and built the
ruined homes anew,
And thankful were they'd lived the
troublous period through.

One afternoon a fleet from Spain in
close array
Came slowly sailing up the winding
Dolphin's Bay
And cast the clanking anchor near
San Marco's fort,
That grim and frowning stood, de-
fender of the port.
On board the fleet, a new commander
came from Spain,
A lordly Don of high degree, and in
his train

THE FAIR ELENA

His fair young bride. A rose among
Castilian flowers,
The dew of youth scarce brushed
from childhood's happy hours,
A rose with opening lips, in wonder,
at the world,
Before unknown. But now its mys-
teries, wide unfurled,
Oppress and bruise the tender petals
of the heart—
For she unwilling was to wed—and
torn apart
From all her soul held dear, in mock-
ery of vows
Was forced to perjure self, and rank
and wealth espouse,
A captive vassal, in procession
brought to swell
His rank and state—thus she, poor
maid in fetters fell,
A chain invisible, that bound with
strangling cord

THE FAIR ELENA

Her future life, and borne in horror
of her lord,
For he was Alvarez, a grizzled, stern
old knight,
With features graved with scars, im-
prints of many a fight;
A face that long campaigns had
bronzed to parchment hue,
A crafty fox, and merciless—unused
to sue—
A born commander, quick to plan. An
iron will,
A tiger's thirst for blood if roused,
instinct to kill,
Unbending pride in birth. The line-
age of his race
To Adam's time, perhaps beyond,
could backward trace,
Sprung fungus-like—suspicion in his
ready mind,
And jealous doubts of wife, his friend,
and all mankind,

THE FAIR ELENA

A subtle poison, new distilled, sharp
fanged with pain,
Luxuriant thrived within his dark and
scheming brain;
The tiger wed with lamb! The hawk
with dove is gyved,
So Alvarez the fierce the fair Elena
wived.

The sounding trumpet's ringing note
broke on the ear,
Re-echoed from the wood's green
wall, and city near,
While banners decked the rampart's
front, and greeting gave
As cannon roared in noisy salvos o'er
the wave.
Then flecked with barges many oared
the placid bay,
Transporting troops and stores from
where the galleons lay,

THE FAIR ELENA

And in procession marched toward
the stern old fort.

Don Alvarez, with sword and cross
and all his court,

With sounding shouts, and ringing
cheers on every side,

“Long live Don Alvarez, and blessings
on his bride.”

Thus opened wide the gates, to welcome
on the strand

Don Alvarez of Spain—new governor
of the land.

Loud rang the soldier’s laugh as fell
the shades of night,

And comrades greet old friends, as
swiftly wings its flight

From hand to hand the well-filled
beaker on its rounds;

While tinkling thrum of light guitar
and merry sounds

THE FAIR ELENA

Of mandolin and castanet the echoes
brought
Of gala days in old Castile, with
pleasures fraught,
And twice-told tales are heard of
'scapes by field and flood,
And wondrous feats of arms 'mid
hecatombs of blood,
Till evening hours were builded deep
in later night,
And chapel bell and tap of drum ex-
tinguished light,
And all was hushed save where some
wanderer vigil kept,
And clanking, paced his measured
watch o'er those that slept;
Or sounds from out the city streets,
while passing by—
"Ave Marie Purissima," the watch-
man's cry.
So closed the day, and night shone out
with myriad stars

THE FAIR ELENA

Reflected in a thousand forms of
gilded bars
Upon the breast of tranquil waters,
fast asleep—
All still save gentle swell, the breath-
ing of the deep.

The morning came, and with it fare-
well message said,
For home returning bound, the snowy
sails are spread,
And on old ocean's bosom borne, with
favoring breeze,
The galleons take their lengthened
flight across the seas,
While from the seaward wall the fair
Elena viewed
The parting ships with feelings deep
of solitude.
They linked her home in fair Castile
with this unknown,

THE FAIR ELENA

That home so far away, and she left
here alone.

The link was severed then that made
her home seem near,

These messengers returning there
seemed doubly dear—

And gazing out the lookout's tower
till every trace

Of fading sail was merged within the
cloudland place,

She still with straining eyes far dis-
tant sought to gain

A last fond look at those so soon to
be in Spain.

While visions o'er the watery waste
before her smiled,

A gleam of fairyland, where once she
roamed, a child—

And trod with lightsome foot the rose-
strewn path, to hide,

Or blithely danced in childish glee
some friend beside.

THE FAIR ELENA

And then Hernando's form in vision
 seemed to rise,
And all unconscious why, the fair
 Elena sighs—
Hernando, once her hero, king, her
 playmate, friend,
The child's ideal of youthful grace.
 Pray heaven to send
Those happy days once more, when
 she was light and free,
Before this storm cloud wafted her
 beyond the sea.
And then there came a shadowy sense
 of coming ill,
A gathering cloud of dread, that
 gloomed with icy chill,
A shivering thrill of fear, presenti-
 ment that gave
A shock, as when one treads unknow-
 ing on his grave.
And hastening, panic struck, adown
 the tower stair,

THE FAIR ELENA

She sought, as might a wounded doe,
its secret lair,
And panting, reached the rude and
narrow casemate room.
There, shuddering, turned, as one es-
caped some dreadful doom,
And sobbed relief, in woman's pre-
cious refuge—tears—
Till tired sleep erased the sense of all
her fears.
Then in the visions of the night there
floated fair
Hernando's form. And sounded on
the fragrant air
His voice harmonious, tuned respon-
sive to her heart,
And life once more was wreathed in
smiles, as far apart
From waking hours as Paradise
from dungeon cell,
The dismal place where morn con-
demned her still to dwell.

THE FAIR ELENA

And thus began that weary time when
moments seem
As hours—and hours in lengthening
stretch as in a dream,
When time expands to years. A life
compressed apace
Within an instant's time, within a
breathing space.
Each present day as like the day that
passed before,
As wave resembles wave, in ripples
on the shore.
So, slowly moving down the stagnant
stream of days,
With naught of charm to mark their
flight. And naught allays
The thirst for home, with all its bliss
and dear delight,
As frequent these return to mind, in
pictured sight.
And oft she sat and gazed at eve far
o'er the sea,

THE FAIR ELENA

And watched with longing eyes the
 sea birds wheeling free,
When through the filmy haze and
 slowly gathering night,
In columned ranks, they whirled, and
 homeward took their flight.
Not bound, as she, within the narrow,
 frowning walls,
But ocean wide, to towering sky, were
 spread their halls.
The very air within the fort its free-
 dom lost,
In haste it sped without and fled, as
 tempest tost,
With speedy wings, far o'er the land
 of whispering pines—
So flee the angels fair from deep and
 dark designs.
As victim held, and crushed within
 the hand of fate,
Her weary spirit writhed, hopeless,
 disconsolate.

THE FAIR ELENA

Her soul its pinions beat against the
iron hand
That marred her life, and all its former pleasures banned.
So slowly moved the hours, each
lengthening day grew night,
Each night gave lingering birth to
morn—scarce marked the flight
Of time, with aught beyond the daily
tread-mill round—
The clank of arms. Old ocean's monotone of sound—
The outlined forest dark, with prisoning bars of pine,
That like an outer wall her prison doors confine,
While seaward spread the bounded sky, dropped space
That fettered sight within her dreary prison place.
So sat she there, with hungry heart
and longing eyes,

THE FAIR ELENA

While landward rolled the foam-
 kissed waves that met her sighs
And vainly searched the verge of
 ocean's distant rim
Till night brought needed rest to
 weary eyes grown dim,
And oranged breathed the winds, in
 whispers low and sweet,
Like visions brought her home and
 playmates at her feet.
Thus melted day to day, in woeful dis-
 content,
Each hour a sigh, each wakeful night
 a long lament,
Till wayward fate or subtle chance
 the curtain drew,
Rekindled light in life, and comfort
 gave anew.
For rumored wars made need, and
 new recruits from Spain
Were sent, to surely hold this outpost
 on the main.

THE FAIR ELENA

And with these troops Hernando
came, unknowing, there,
Within San Marco's frowning walls,
the lady fair
Abiding place had found. He knew
that she was wed,
And far removed from Spain. So
chance his footsteps led,
And brought him to this far-off realm,
where face to face
He met once more his childhood's
friend, so full of grace,
A sweet surprise to each, when at the
journey's end
To find upon this distant strand each
owned a friend.
And in her soulful, sad and longing
eyes he read
Unmeasured hours of loneliness, and
all the dread
Those hours had stored of sickening
pain within her heart.

THE FAIR ELENA

It moved his knightly soul to rise and
rend apart

The cankering thongs and rescue her
from all her care.

Her knight, her will in honor bound
to do and dare,

Content for any toil if haply he might
gain

A smile, to blossom new from out that
look of pain.

He cheery pranks would play and
stratagems invent

To charm away her grief and change
to merriment.

He searched the woodland's wealth
for fairy ferns and flowers,

He gathered store of shells, fresh
plucked from coral bowers.

The gems that, like a prodigal, the
reckless sea

Profusely cast upon the shore in joy-
ous glee

THE FAIR ELENA

Each day, some treasure rare, in color
 glowing, warm,
Some wondrous marvel found of
 strangely fashioned form
To glad her sight and gild an hour
 with sweet surprise
At nature's handiwork unclosed to
 curious eyes.
Then life grew strangely sweet. Each
 day, rose colored, spread
The languid hours new flushed with
 life and banished dread,
Save when her lord appeared, and
 then a rising fear
That, shuddering, filled her soul while
 Alvarez was near.
The sun shone in her heart when he
 was far away.
His storm-cloud face obscured, when
 near, her brightest day;
E'en then Hernando's voice would
 flood the lowering gloom

THE FAIR ELENA

With golden sunset hues. Anew her
 life would bloom,
And she, poor soul, ne'er had a
 thought or dream of harm,
No transient sense to either came that
 might alarm,
That nesting in their hearts was
 friendship grown to love,
And full control possessed of each all
 else above—
'Twas happiness to live, to simply
 breathe the air,
Together be, together watch the
 world so fair,
Pure innocence with each. As chil-
 dren playful grasp
The roses blooming fresh, and thorns
 unwitting clasp.
Ah, cruel fate! to tempt poor human
 nature so,
And hide the quicksand's deadly path
 with roseate glow.

THE FAIR ELENA

That dangerous road these two so far
 had entered in,
That shadows of eternal night and
 mortal sin
Gloomed darkly o'er their heads, pit-
 falls on either side;
Unconscious pair—they wandered on
 without a guide.
Fate strides with footsteps free, and
 surely overtakes
A mortal's pace, however great the
 speed he makes.
And happiness is but the globule's
 tinted form,
That ruddy glows in painted color,
 rich and warm—
As floating in the air, it, towering, up-
 ward flies,
A radiant star. In seeming, firm as
 the eternal skies,
One instant bright, the next 'tis gone,
 a film in air;

THE FAIR ELENA

In darkness plunged the light and life,
that promised fair.

Meanwhile with watchful eye Alvarez
vigil kept—
Suspicion rankled in his brain, and
never slept,
But smouldered with the inward fire,
intense of hate,
Soul searing burned, and vengeance's
flood alone could sate.
Each deed or look, though light as
thistle-down in air,
As weighty evidence of guilt within
his lair,
In mind he, raging, seized and turned
it o'er and o'er,
In search of deep intent—a hidden
something more
Than on the surface seemed. To him
a deep design

THE FAIR ELENA

Was borne in every glance, an influence all malign,
Yet crafty and dissembling well, no signal gave
Of doubt, or warning voice, that might the victim save.

Chivalrous in his faith, Hernando's utmost thought
Was kindly deed and faithful trust to guard from aught
That might a glooming shadow cast upon the day,
From care to alienate and clear the thorny way
From out the fair Elena's path.
Within his eyes
A haloed saint she was—an angel in disguise—
Her casemate bower a cloistered cell—
a sacred shrine.

THE FAIR ELENA

The lady's service and the King's his
heart entwine,
No thought of love for her had blossomed in his mind;
The new-born soul of love, within his
soul confined,
No signal gave of life that would his
honor fright,
And scatter withering frost forever-
more to blight.
Elena, too, the slumberous love within
her breast
Not manifest to her. For coyly in his
nest
Young love, so newly waked, was
stranger to her eyes,
Yet being there, by magic changed to
Paradise
The arid desert of her life. And she,
content,
Ne'er reasoned how or why, but gave
a glad consent

THE FAIR ELENA

To each day's pleasure as it came, and
careless drew
A honeyed joy from every changeful
hour that grew.

And so one eve, it chanced, the sun
was newly set—
They watched the colors fade, beyond
the parapet
Uprose the great round moon and cast
abroad her rays
In threads of light, to weave her web
in human ways.
A woof of much of mischief, love and
sweetness blent,
A spell of witching madness oft to
lovers sent—
For love's distilled potent and most
intoxicate,
When silver tipped the waves with
moonbeams scintillate,

THE FAIR ELENA

And Cupid's arrows dipped the sparkling
cauldron in

Envenomed are, and swifter fly, the
heart to win.

With heaving breast the greenwood
tossed and gently sighed,

As toyed the breeze with amorous kiss
the swelling tide,

Each dainty leaflet, trembling in the
soft embrace,

With quivering nerve expectant in its
trysting place.

Beneath the fortress wall a wandering
minstrel sang,

Commingling with the dreamy night,
the music rang

With tinkling mandolin, the sturdy
cavalier

Trolled forth this serenade the words
and music clear :

THE FAIR ELENA

Warily crouches the tiger,
Fiercely watching his prey;
Angrily glaring through thicket,
Stealthily creeping his way.

Love the fair maiden entrances,
Sweet sings her heart to its tune,
Dreamily wandering the pathway,
Silvery kissed by the moon.

Velvet the tread of the tiger,
Soft as the silvery light;
Ware thee the thicket, fair maiden,
Hasten thee homeward in flight.

Flashes a shade o'er the pathway,
Echoes a thunderous roar;
Broken the tryst of the fair one,
Maiden, thy love dream is o'er.

The music ceased. The singer
strolled his distant way,

THE FAIR ELENA

Unwitting that a warning bore his
idle lay
To ears that heard and eyes that saw
their last of earth,
For o'er them hovered death, amid the
joy and mirth
A ghastly night, forevermore about
the pair,
Enshrouding deep in gloom the sensuous,
moonlit air.
Within the angle of the fort Alvarez
stood,
And jealous passion burned his brain
to savage mood.
Blue black the knotted veins upon the
forehead rise,
And deadly hate infuriate gleams
within his eyes,
As Alvarez, with stealthy steps, upon
them creeps
In murderous ire, as tiger, crouching
ere he leaps—

THE FAIR ELENA

Then close Hernando came to fair
Elena's side,
With bounding pulse they gazed upon
the silver tide.
The wanton breeze unleashed her
wealth of ebon hair
From out its strict confine, and float-
ing light in air,
With tingling touch it, veil-like, fell
upon his face,
And captive bound him helpless in its
flossy grace,
A wildering perfume, subtly, mind
and sense unfold;
Then burst the passion's storm, no
more by force controlled,
As sweeps the flood of light when
wakes the tropic day,
So instant light illumines their minds
with sudden ray,
That heart to heart in adamant
chain is bound;

THE FAIR ELENA

And each within the other's soul supreme is crowned.

One moment, then transformed,
transfigured each with bliss,

Oh! ye who drain life's wine, what vintage rivals this!

One instant thus, and then as sudden tropic night

Obscures the day, so vanished from their lives the light

Of happiness. Instead, a burning sense of shame,

Of broken vows, of mortal sin, and sullied name.

With horror overwhelmed, the inmost soul laid bare,

With pallid lips that could not speak, the hapless pair,

As our first parents, from their Eden, shuddering, turned,

As Alvarez before them sprung. And savage burned

THE FAIR ELENA

The volumed blast of hate, in imprecations rung
The deep-toned vengeance pouring
from his blood-stained tongue,
While helpless, mutely stand, in impotent dismay,
These two unfortunates, as Alvarez
barred the way.
And naught Hernando found to offer
in defence
As Alvarez, Elena seized and dragged
her thence,
But like a statue stood in frozen
marble fair,
Till once again the demon came, and
found him there.
Then desolate, as closed his clanging
dungeon door,
In agony beyond his strength, upon
the floor
He stricken fell, and blank oblivion
welcome gave

THE FAIR ELENA

The sorely beaten soul in Lethe's
cooling wave.

The night drew on apace, and thunders
distant rolled,

The chapel bell in ghostly chimes the
midnight tolled.

Before the altar knelt a figure robed
in white,

In agony of suppliance bent, in
piteous plight.

A faint and drooping girl, with out-
stretched, pleading hands

To Mary—Mother—true to those in
sorrow's bands,

And throbbed her heart in wildest
ecstasy of pain

As at the mercy seat she vainly sought
to gain

A pardon for her fault from Heaven
so far above.

THE FAIR ELENA

This overwhelming gulf—her guilty,
new-found love,
Till crushing with the weight it
strength and sense o'ercame,
And swooning, laid the sacrifice, her
weary frame,
A limp and helpless form upon the
altar stair
As Alvarez appeared. His bloodshot
eyes insanely glare,
He crossed the aisle in feverish haste
and seized her there,
With purpose fixed and firm, and then
his steps retraced.
And there, unseen of men, his lovely
burden placed
Within her couch of doom—a narrow
iron cage—
A rusted relic, left from some for-
gotten age,
That wed with chains an inner wall,
and mouldering stood

THE FAIR ELENA

An iron grave prepared, and yearning
for its food,
A spot secluded deep, within the castle
wall,
Beneath the angle of the fort and
tower tall,
Whose ponderous stones defend the
outer seaward sides,
There placed this narrow cell. A solid
wall divides
The meagre space from out the corri-
dor's expanse.
A hidden nook, so formed apart that
only chance
Its secret station might disclose to
prying eyes.
At either end, with fiendish art, twin
cages rise,
Enclosed within the cruel bars—that
mocking grate.
United in this living tomb, but sep-
arate,

THE FAIR ELENA

The victims of Alvarez' wrath, scarce
living, flung.

Oh! Heaven forbid the deed to these
so fair and young.

With desperate zeal Alvarez, with one
attendant grim,

The rapid trowel waved above the
fateful brim

Of mortared brick to close the narrow
entrance space.

A quicksand's gulf, it rose above a
burial place,

A dungeon and a tomb; no ray of hope
or light

Could weakly pierce that massive wall,
or chance of flight

E'er reach the soul confined within
such prison bounds;

No chance to pitying ears attent their
moans might sound;

Silence unbroke—all hushed within
that dismal cell,

THE FAIR ELENA

A torture doom complete, and worthy
fiends of hell.

What hope of heaven could ever dawn
within the breast

Of any mortal man with such a crime
opprest?

Oh, God! but it were pain to die by
flood or fire,

Or chained by savage hands upon the
funeral pyre,

On battle plain amid the charge of
rushing host,

Or drowning, dashed by sea upon the
rock-bound coast.

But even then the blessed sun or star-
lit sky

A consolation bears to those about to
die.

What thought or feeling came within
that dreary cell?

No sound the echo wakes—no tongue
the terrors tell—

THE FAIR ELENA

The silence of the grave—naught else
to human ken.
Thus disappeared these two from
sight of living men
When closed the solid wall that barred
from human sight
Alvarez and his guilty aid to outer
night
Sped forth. They two went out—but
Alvarez alone,
Blood-stained, returned. Could death
unshrived the deed atone,
As slowly sinking down to reach its
resting-place
A ghastly murdered form, with pallid,
sin-struck face,
To vision lost in ooze, and mire, and
watery way,
In silence waiting dawn of resurrec-
tion day?
And Alvarez henceforth no time of
placid sleep

THE FAIR ELENA

Can e'er his eyelids close. Then
grizly phantoms creep,
The shapeless things that fiercely
stare from out the night,
With clutching, bony hands, impal-
pable to sight.
Yet ever reaching forth, the fancies
of the mind
That shape themselves in hideous
dreams and helpless bind .
The horror-stricken wretch on whom
they sternly leer,
Till sleep forsakes his burning eyes
from deadly fear.
Now drew a curtain thick of clouds
athwart the sky,
And moaning sighed the breeze and
stirred the forest nigh .
With mournful sound, as though the
dead and buried throng
Of those long turned to dust were
come with ghastly tongue

THE FAIR ELENA

Of protest 'gainst the cruel deed.
Each, shuddering, stands
In terror trembling, fixed, with wav-
ing, fleshless hands,
That vainly seek to veil the sight from
sylvan eyes
Of murder foul, and dastard human
sacrifice.
Now louder wails the wind, and pulses
on the shore
The waves in measured tones, a knell
forevermore.

The hand of time has moved the dial
space a span,
An atom of the great profound—a
life of man,
And with the changing years Spain's
flag no longer flies
O'er San Augustine's fort and town.
That jewelled prize
A nation newly born, by peaceful art,
has gained.

THE FAIR ELENA

The fort dismantled now, its warlike
glory waned,
A pleasure spot is grown, in which
to dream an idle hour.
Its battlements are tumbling down,
and near the tower
A broken roof that entrance gave,
through stones displaced,
To curious eyes that finding then the
secret, traced,
Disclosed a vaulted cell, and in the
highest part,
Scarce room to stand erect, so planned
with fiendish art,
Within the fortress' solid walls that
only time
With steady, moving hand blazons the
hideous crime
And casts the light of day, through
dust and fallen stones,
Upon the rusted cage and slowly
crumbling bones,

THE FAIR ELENA

The relics of an age, they mutely witness bear,
When darkening night spread deep its wings o'er black despair.
Yet what is left untold though eloquent these grow,
No ear, nor eye unsealed by sleep can ever know.
The tide ebbs out to sea, and springs the sudden night
Upon the day so fair, and swiftly strangles light.
Then come there forth uncanny creatures from the wall,
Of kind elsewhere unknown; strange birds that sight appall,
As restless flitting round the creviced fortress gray
Uneasy ghosts they seem, for crime condemned to stay
And haunt from dusk to dawn the sin-accursed spot

THE FAIR ELENA

Wherein, in times long past, their evil
deeds were wrought;
Creatures of night and ghosts of evil
deeds, they creep
About the crumbling walls, wherein
their victims sleep,
With cruel eyes aglare, as though with
hidden woe
Of never ending inward fire the por-
tals glow
Till gray the night becomes, then
filled with quickening fears,
They seek their hiding place till night
again appears.
While morning scatters amaranth
upon the deep,
With glowing kisses wakes the blush-
ing sea from sleep,
And wakened love and life again re-
sume their sway,
Secure in happier hours, that bless
this later day.



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